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AUTHOR Myers, Mildred S.
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the written communication at the technical/professional and managerial levels in a "Fortune 500" corporation to determine whether managers/executives had different communications purposes and, therefore, used different rhetorical strategies and approaches than did professional/technical staff. Rhetorical analysis was conducted of 104 documents from the technical/professional staff and 130 from the managerial/executive ranks. In addition, interviews were conducted with various staff members. The results revealed major differences between the written communications of managers/executives and those of technical/professional employees. The majority (66%) of the managerial/executive communications was descriptive rather than analytic, while over half (54%) of the professional/technical samples was analytic--much of it research reports or problem analyses. Approximately one third of the managerial/executive writing samples involved giving orders or direction, something the professional/technical staff did only 11% of the time. In addition, managers/executives devoted half of their communications to "topical information" or "clarification correspondence," while the professional/technical staff seldom used these types of communications. (FL)

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WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AT THE MANAGERIAL AND TECHNICAL LEVELS: A CASE STUDY

Working Paper Series

Mildred S. Myers
Graduate School of Business
University of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

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WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AT THE MANAGERIAL AND TECHNICAL LEVELS: A CASE STUDY

Abstract

This paper reports on a study of written communication at the technical/professional and managerial levels in a Fortune 500 corporation. Underlying the study is the proposition (supported by a body of organizational and communications theory) that managers and executives have different communications purposes and, therefore, use different rhetorical strategies and approaches than do professional or technical staff (such as financial analysts or engineers). The purpose of the study was to test this proposition by discovering, through rhetorical analysis of documents and interviews with executives and managers, how managerial communication differs from technical or professional communication and what factors account for the differences. The paper reports the results of the study and discusses the curricular and research implications of those results for those who concern themselves with the development of managerial communication skills. Major portions of this paper were presented at the Symposium on Writing and Designing Documents: Research and Practical Solutions, at Carnegie-Mellon University, October 10, 1980.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AT THE MANAGERIAL AND TECHNICAL LEVELS: A CASE STUDY

Introduction

Training for business communication is a big business in itself these days. Countless companies spend huge sums of money on in-house programs to teach engineers and technical people how to prepare and present a report. These same companies send their up-and-coming managers and executives to executive development courses and programs sponsored by universities or professional associations, and these courses almost always include a "communications" component. College and university students preparing for a business career take courses in "business and professional writing," and nearly all MBA programs include a course or workshop in communications skills. The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, the accrediting agency for undergraduate and graduate business programs, recently sponsored a seminar on "Building Communications Skills in Business Students," a sign that communications skills programs may be on their way to becoming required parts of the business curriculum.

Some distinctions can be made among most of these business communications efforts in terms of how they are structured, what they cover, to whom they are oriented, and by whom they are taught. The courses and texts taught or authored by English teachers or writing consultants are, primarily, writing courses (although they may have an oral component). The goal in most of these courses is to develop in the participants the ability to analyze a specific, often technical, problem, to synthesize the data that result from the analysis, and to report on it in such a way that the recipient can use the report to make a decision on the issue. On the other

hand, those organizational or management communications courses and texts taught or authored by business school faculty or management consultants focus almost entirely on interpersonal communication skills, either formal or one-to-one, with only an occasional session or chapter offering a few guidelines for written communication.

Apparently, then, those whose business is specifically management or executive training define "communication" differently than do those whose primary concern is to teach people to write effective analyses and reports. The distinction between the two types of courses is so clear that it suggests something more fundamental than differences in instructors' backgrounds and interests as the cause. It is the thesis of this paper that the differences in communications courses and texts result from substantial differences in the communications needs and practices of people at different points in an organizational hierarchy. In other words, people who are being prepared for or who have reached the managerial or executive ranks have different communications patterns and practices and, therefore, different communications training needs than do engineers or chemists or financial analysts or accountants, and these patterns and practices require skills not normally addressed in professional or technical writing courses and texts. The questions that arise from this assertion are the questions that this research project was designed to answer:

1) Do those members of an organization whose position is managerial or executive have different communications patterns, problems, and needs than do engineers, accountants, lawyers, chemists, computer specialists, marketing researchers, or economic or financial analysts whose role is to perform the

experiments or gather the data or anlyze the financial information that their managerial and executive superiors will use to set policy and procedures for the organization?

2) If the answer to this question is "yes," if "managerial" communication differs from "professional" or "technical" communication, what are those differences, and what causes them?

3) Finally, if the differences exist and can be explained, are there implications for those people (whether they are English teachers and writing consultants or business school teachers and management consultants) who concern themselves with the development of managerial communications skills?

Background Literature in Organizational Theory and Communications

The impetus for this research was an increasingly strong sense, based on a growing body of anecdotal evidence, that "business" or "professional" writing (as defined and discussed in most of the highly-respected and widely-used texts) is not the kind of writing that managers do, and that managers have unique writing patterns and needs that result from their being managers; i.e., from their being at a different level in the organizational hierarchy than the professional or technical staff. The anecdotal and personal evidence was bolstered by a large body of organizational and management theory and research on levels in organizations and on the characteristics of managerial and executive duties. Because this distinction between managerial and professional or technical work is so critical to the entire study, a brief review of that literature is in order before proceeding to a description of the actual research project.

The place to begin is with Mintzberg's study, The Nature of Managerial Work, in which he notes these differences between managers and other staff:

> Most work in society involves specialization and concentration. Machine operators may learn to make one part and then spend weeks doing so; engineers and programmers often spend months designing a single bridge or computer program; salesmen often spend their working lives selling one line of products. The manager can expect no such concentration of efforts. Rather, his activities are characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation.(1)

Other distinguishing factors relate to a manager's authority over others. For example, Mintzberg refers to the work of the "Carnegie theorists" (Simon, March, Cyert, and Newell) who characterized a manager as an "unprogrammed decision-maker who programs the work of others."(2)

In addition to Mintzberg and the others who make a distinction by task or authority, there is a group of scholars who make the distinction by organizational function, as in Figure One. This chart is adapted from one designed by Jerrell, who based his framework on models constructed by Parsons and Simon. (3) Parsons suggested that an organization may be divided into three levels, the institutional, the managerial, and the technical, while Simon pictured the organization as a "three-layered cake" in which the bottom layer (the technical system) accomplishes the basic work, the middle layer (the managerial system) governs the day-to-day operations by making the appropriate decisions, and the top layer (the institutional system) designs the organization's goals and monitors its performance. (4) (5)

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	ACTORS	PRIMARY FUNCTIONS
Institutional	Board of Directors	Governance (legal) responsibilities) Goal setting Policy formulation
Managerial	Executives	Enact policy into strategy
	Middle Managers	Implement strategy through establishment and monitoring or procedures
Technical Professional	Engineers, chemists, accountants, etc.	Carry out procedures Provide data to be used in formulation of new strategies and procedures

FIGURE ONE. Organizational Levels, Actors, and Functions

This body of literature is supported further by the work of organizational communication specialists such as Baird, Downs, Mayerson, and others who have developed definitions, characteristics, and categories of managerial communication. Their categories mirror the managerial functions and roles defined by Mintzberg and the management theorists. (6) (7) (8) Downs and his colleagues identify four major organizational communication functions, of which one, the "command and regulative function," is described as "peculiarly a

management prereogative," because "an order presumes that the communicator is in a position of authority to issue the command and to expect the receiver to comply." (9) Similarly, Mayerson points out in her managerial communication text that "managers are concerned with increasing both total and individual effectiveness of their workers...." and devotes several chapters to "Facilitating Subordinates," "Mediating Conflict," and "The Manager as Counselor." (10)

Research Design and Methodology

Given the surprisingly weighty corroboration, in the literature, of the original anecdotal and intuitive data, the obvious next step was to actually test the proposition that managers and executives have different communications purposes and patterns and, therefore, use different rhetorical strategies and approaches than do technical or professional personnel. The research was conducted as a case study of written communication at the managerial and professional or technical levels in the research laboratory of a major, Fortune-500 corporation. The research laboratory is almost a microcosm of the entire corporation in its structure, having a chief executive (the Vice President in charge of research and development), a number of managers in charge of several different divisions (both technical and non-technical), and a large corps of scientists, engineers, accountants, economic analysts, and computer staff who make up the professional and technical ranks.

The data came from files of documents all having to do with one project that had run over a period of approximately ten years. The documents had been generated by people at all ranks within the laboratory as well as by executives, managers, and professional or technical staff at the company's headquarters. From this mass of material, approximately two hundred documents were selected

for close, rhetorical analysis. They were chosen as representative documents; for example, when there were hundreds of weekly progress reports -- all identical in format -- on one, technical process that was run regularly, only one or two were used as examples. The final sample included 104 documents from the professional/technical ranks and 130 from the managerial and executive ranks.

The rhetorical analysis of these documents included a number of tests or classifications:

1) A breakdown by writing situation for both the managerial and the professional/technical groups, to establish what kinds of writing situations are most frequent for each group. The classifications were based on fourteen "presentation patterns" developed by David Ewing (an editor of Harvard Business Review) in the first edition of Writing for Results. He identified fourteen patterns which, according to his extensive sampling, account for over two-thirds of the written communication in business, government, military, educational, and arts organizations. (11)

2) A breakdown by discourse type, or category, according to a model originally developed by Jakobson and expanded upon by Winterowd in Contemporary Rhetoric. (12) Kinneavy has presented a similar model. (13) Both models categorize discourse by purpose. For example, the purpose of "referential" discourse is to convey information, as in a scientific report, for example. "Conative," or, in Kinneavy's terms, "persuasive," discourse, on the other hand, focusses on a person -- the person being addressed -- rather than on information being conveyed; its purpose is to have a persuasive effect or impact on the person being addressed. The other categories relevant to this project were "phatic" discourse, which has as its purpose simply making contact and keeping communica-

tions channels open, and "emotive" discourse, in which the purpose is self-expression, as in journal- or diary-writing, or when a person writes to express pain or pleasure. The point of this analysis was to see whether there are significant differences between the discourse patterns of managers and executives and those of the professional/ technical group.

3) A breakdown of the primary audiences (executives, managers, technical or professional staff, internal, external) addressed by each group. This analysis was meant to establish the degree to which each group's written communications patterns are upward, downward, lateral, or external.

4) An analysis to see whether discourse category is related to audience; that is, are certain discourse types regularly used in addressing certain audiences?

5) An analysis of rhetorical strategies used; i.e., does rhetorical strategy differ as writing situations differ? Aristotle's "artistic proofs" or means of persuasion were used to categorize rhetorical strategy. (14) They include "ethos," in which the speaker's character -- the speaker in and of himself -- is the means of persuasion or argument; "pathos," in which persuasion is effected by the production of certain attitudes or emotions in the audience; and "logos," in which the information being presented is in itself the means of argument. Aristotle called these "artistic proofs," in which an effort had to be made by the speaker. "Non-artistic proofs" are already existing documentation such as written contracts; this category was used for materials which were written merely to document rather than to elicit action or decision. The purpose of this analysis was to

determine whether "managerial" writers used different rhetorical strategies than did professional or technical writers.

6) An analysis of rhetorical strategy in relation to audience, to determine whether the organizational position of the person being addressed (subordinate, superior, peer, insider, or outsider) affected rhetorical strategy.

The data analyses were accompanied and followed by interviews with the Vice President (an almost classic example of someone who has risen from the professional to the managerial to the executive ranks) and with various managers of both technical and non-technical divisions. Some of these interviews formal and structured, designed to elicit responses to specific questions raised by the data, while others (which occurred frequently throughout the course of the study) were informal and unplanned. The latter often produced valuable confirming information in anecdotal form.

Results

The rhetorical analyses demonstrated conclusively that there are some major differences between the written communications of managers and executives and those of technical or professional employees. These differences were found, to a greater or lesser degree, across all of the analyses that were done and were confirmed by the interviews with executives and managers.

It is clear that work roles and duties have a major effect on the kind of writing a person does. Divided into Ewing's presentation patterns, in which he distinguishes between "analytic" and "descriptive" writing, the great majority (86%) of the managerial/executive sample was descriptive rather than analytic, while over half (54%) of the professional/technical sample was analytic, much of it in the form of research reports or problem analyses. (The difference

according to Ewing, is that analytic writing features "analysis or diagnosis and appraisal of a situation or problem" while descriptive writing is meant to "tell the reader what is happening or will happen, what the nature of a situation is, what steps to follow to achieve a result, and so on."[15]

Another difference is that just about one third (32%) of the managerial/executive sample involved giving orders or direction or instructions, something the professional/technical people did only eleven per cent of the time. These figures are corroborated by Mintzberg's data; in his sample (which consisted of chief executives), thirty per cent of the "mail" they generated had as its purpose passing information or requests or direction to subordinates.[16] (Mintzberg also found that executives dislike reflective activities and aggregated information. This may suggest that when aggregated information is needed, in the form of a report, they order their professional/technical subordinates to write, thus accounting for the high percentage of managerial communication involving order-giving and the low percentage devoted to report-writing!)

Managers and executives devoted half (50%) of their written communication efforts to what Ewing calls "topical information" (such as "plans of action," "statements of impressions or judgments," or "descriptions of processes") and "clarification correspondence" (including questions or responses to questions or requests for facts, judgments, statements of position, etc.").[17] Professional and technical personnel used these categories, too, but far less (31%) than did managers and executives.

The types of managerial activities suggested by these data are confirmed by various studies of managerial behavior. Reporting on "The Work Activities of Middle Managers," Horne found that most of them "spend about three quarters of their time on activities of organizing, regulating, controlling...." and

concluded that "middle management does not seem ... to require the exercise of remarkable powers to analyse, weigh alternatives, and decide. Rather, it calls for the ability to shape and utilize the person-to-person channels of communication, to influence, to persuade, to facilitate." (18)

Similarly, Mintzberg identified these "important managerial skills -- developing peer relationships, carrying out negotiations, motivating subordinates, resolving conflicts, establishing information networks and subsequently disseminating information, making decisions in conditions of extreme ambiguity, and allocating resources." (19)

The conclusion to be drawn from these earlier activity studies as well as from the present analysis is that managerial communication focusses on directing, describing, and clarifying, while professional or technical communication is characterized by what Ewing calls "problem analysis" or "situational appraisal" (detailing descriptions and causes of problems, considering alternative courses of action, and recommending appropriate reactions or solutions based on technical or statistical data). (20) Most professional and technical writing courses and texts focus on the latter, while most organizational communication texts and courses focus on the former.

The second analysis used the Jakobson/Winterowd discourse model to look at purpose. Here the differences were less dramatic, but still significant. Both groups used "referential" discourse, in which the emphasis is on data to which reference is made and the purpose is to convey information, most of the time, but there were differences in frequency. Professional/technical people used referential discourse eighty-four per cent of the time; the managerial/executive group used it two-thirds of the time. Furthermore, managers and executives used conative (persuasive) discourse almost twice as much (nineteen per cent compared with eleven per cent) as did professional/technical personnel. Neither group

used phatic discourse (keeping the communications lines open) very often, but managers used it four times as often as the others. It is also interesting to note that executives did not use phatic discourse at all; apparently, they see no need to communicate just for the sake of making contact, while managers do feel such a need or responsibility, both with their superiors and their subordinates. Professional and technical staff (or anyone at the lower points of the hierarchy) may also feel the need for contact, but they may have fewer appropriate occasions on which they can make contact for contact's sake.

Concern for appropriateness also may govern use of the emotive, or self-expressive, type of discourse, because managers and executives indulged in it in eight per cent of their writing, more than twice as often as the professional/technical people. Once again, position in the organizational hierarchy and behavior appropriate to one's position probably provide more opportunities for those higher up the ladder to express their personal feelings. The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that while both groups used referential discourse a majority of the time, managers and executives did use other types in one third of their writing, raising the question of whether or how writing texts or courses do or should approach the use of discourse other than referential.

If it is true, as it appears to be, that position in the organizational hierarchy makes certain kinds of expression more or less appropriate, then it is reasonable to expect that the rhetorical strategies people use--the methods they employ to make their points or achieve their purposes--will also be affected. If, as Mintzberg and others (such as French and Raven in their study of "The Bases of Social Power" [21] have demonstrated, power derives, at least in part, from the position one occupies, then those who occupy powerful positions should be able to justify their requests or orders or suggestions simply by virtue of their positions. And, it turns out, this is often the case.

When the data were analyzed for rhetorical strategy, using the Aristotelian "proofs" of logos, pathos, and ethos, it became obvious that the higher the position, the more a person depended on his own "ethos," or "character," as defined by his position, to provide his argument or justification. Managers and executives used ethos as their rhetorical strategy (meaning that it was clear that whatever they were saying or requesting was so or was to happen because they said it or asked it) in one quarter of their writing. When managers and executives are divided, it turned out that executives, who are at the top of the hierarchy, used ethos in over one third of their writing. Professional and technical staff, who have the least powerful positions, used ethos only three per cent of the time (on each other, in occasional competitive jockeying). They made no use, whatsoever, of pathos, the appeal to an audience's emotions, while managers and executives did use pathos approximately ten per cent of the time. Logos, the category in which one's argument is generated solely from the information being presented, was the strategy used by professional and technical staff ninety-two per cent of the time; five per cent of the time they used what Aristotle called "non-artistic proofs," where no argument is necessary. In this example, items such as test results--reports that were all numbers with virtually no commentary--fell into the "non-artistic" category. That ninety-seven per cent of the professional/technical sample fell into the logos or "non-artistic" categories is not surprising for a group whose writing is largely analytic. Nor are the rhetorical strategy figures for managers and executives surprising, especially when they are examined in combination with audience.

Executives used ethos on executives junior to themselves, on managers (to whom forty per cent of their writing was addressed), and on professional or technical employees (on the very rare occasions [two per cent] that they communicated directly with them at all). Managers used ethos largely on the

professional or technical people subordinate to them, to whom they addressed forty per cent of their writing. It turned out, in fact, that virtually anyone (manager or executive) who was in a managerial role addressed approximately forty per cent of his writing to immediate subordinates (senior executives to junior executives, junior executives to managers, managers to technical or professional staff). This is one of the important distinctions between managerial and professional/technical communications: forty per cent of managerial written communication was addressed to subordinates, a situation in which professional or technical people, who have no subordinate corps, did not find themselves. They wrote up the hierarchy, to managers and executives, over half of the time (56%) and to each other the rest of the time, while managers and executives wrote up the hierarchy, to a superior, only one third (32%) of the time, to each other approximately one quarter of the time, and down, to subordinates, approximately forty per cent of the time. These differences are important, because most written communications courses and texts focus on writing up, on writing reports for the boss, while most management communications texts and courses focus on the needs of someone who spends a large portion of time being the boss.

The analysis of rhetorical strategy showed that managers seemed to be less comfortable than executives with ethos. Where executives seemed to be able to say "Do this," managers felt the need, in most instances, to say, "Do this, because...." However, the deciding factor seems to be the position of the audience vis-à-vis the writer. If the manager of the personnel function wants to announce a new personnel evaluation procedure, he may do so in two memoranda. The first, to the staff who will be affected by it, is very short. Its two paragraphs say, essentially, "This is the new policy; this is what you have to do." The second memorandum, to his fellow managers (who will have to participate in and oversee the new procedures) is longer. Using logos, it explains and

justifies the new policy and points out how it will be useful to the managers as well as to the personnel department. The manager who wrote both memoranda commented on the need he felt to justify his "paperwork" administrative operations to his managerial colleagues who were concerned with technical, product-related operations.

It seems quite clear, then, that rhetorical strategy is affected by position in the organizational hierarchy in this way: the higher one's position, the more one is likely to use ethos as a strategy, especially in that forty per cent of one's writing that is addressed to subordinates. The use of pathos is also affected by position, although it is never used much. Professional/technical people did not use it at all; managers used it in ten per cent of their communication (slightly more on other managers than on executives or on subordinates), and executives used it in four per cent of their communication (usually on a superior or on an outsider). Because its total usage was low, not much significance should be attributed to it, but it may be worth noting that just as managers -- the people in the middle of the hierarchy who must see that the people at the bottom carry out the policies set by the people at the top -- were the most likely to use the persuasive or conative category of discourse, where the focus is personal, so were they the most likely to use pathos, the rhetorical strategy that operates on a receiver's emotions.

The final analysis, linking audience with discourse, confirms the importance of one's place in the hierarchy as a variable. The analysis indicated that professional/technical staff used discourse other than referential only sixteen per cent of the time, but when they did, they were writing up, to their managers (twenty four per cent of their writing to their managers is other than referential). The managerial/executive group used non-referential patterns more frequently, and some of their non-referential discourse was directed down as well as up.

Half of the managers' communication to professional or technical people was non-referential, so once again, the fact of having subordinates is a differentiating factor.

The data suggest that even when both the professional/technical group and the managerial/executive group are writing up, to their superiors, there are some important differences. One has already been noted: professional/technical people never used pathos as a rhetorical strategy; managers and executives occasionally did. Discourse patterns also showed some differences. Although professional/technical people did use other than referential patterns when writing up (24% of the time), they did so far less than did managers and executives, who used the non-referential patterns in over half (57%) of their upward communication.

These differences are a function of their positions and duties. Mintzberg found that top executives frequently received what he called "authority requests" from subordinates,

> (a) seeking authorization for an exception to normal operating procedures...,
>
> (b) seeking approval for a new program or procedure..., or
>
> (c) seeking acceptance for a decision or report, usually associated with a resource or policy commitment.... In essence the [executive] was presented with one alternative and asked to give a yes-or-no answer. (22)

Managers and junior executives who want "yes" answers to their "authority requests" but who cannot or will not prove their entire case on paper, at the time, may well write conative rather than referential messages. They focus on the receiver rather than on their cases, and they may even resort to pathos

as an effective rhetorical strategy. An example is a memorandum from a junior to a senior executive, asking for a meeting to discuss a decision the junior executive had heard, via the grapevine, that the senior executive was about to make, a decision he was opposed to. For various reasons having to do with internal politics and personalities (and showing the junior executive to be a shrewd judge of people), the petitioner chose to write a memorandum (rather than telephoning) to request a meeting on the subject. The approach he took intimated that if the boss would be patient enough to allow a meeting to discuss the issue, the requestor might be able to prevent his "giving away something for nothing."

This type of "authority request," in which a manager or executive asks a superior to grant a request on the strength of a threat or a promise, is peculiar to the management ranks. No technical or statistical or technical analysis was performed as a first step to this communication, and there are no data presented to make an argument. Instead, communication has become a bargaining process: "If you give me what I'm requesting (a meeting in which I am going to try to persuade you to change your position on something), I think I can give you the means of avoiding a costly mistake." It is highly unlikely that a technical or professional staff member would write such a memorandum; all of his or her training and activity militate against it, for political reasons, but also because it is such a person's professional responsibility to provide data and evidence. But, according to the executive who related this story and wrote the memorandum, communication of this sort is not unusual, and can be highly effective, in the upper ranks, where one's ability to judge people and their reactions, and to see how one situation relates to another, can be as critical, and useful, as one's ability to draw conclusions and make recommendations based

on a specific set of data. Once again, where one is in the hierarchy determines, at least in part, the skills one needs for successful communication.

CONCLUSION

The rhetorical analyses of the data prove conclusively that there are differences in written communication between the professional/technical and managerial/executive levels. The interviews with technical and non-technical managers and executives provided additional confirmation of specific data and of the generalizations that can be drawn from the data. They also provided considerable information about the managerial communication milieu -- under what circumstances and in what situations people at those levels choose to write, as opposed to talking with people face-to-face; how they sometimes take to writing in order to force their professional/technical subordinates into writing necessary reports; how their own backgrounds (technical or non-technical, educated for management or up-from-the-ranks) affects their communications styles, and so on. This information, coupled with their comments on their subordinates' communications skills and their opinions on the various communications courses and texts that they have taken or heard about, provides food for thought about future directions for training and research in this area.

Given that there are some identifiable characteristics of managerial communication, how can or should those of us concerned with management training and development address the communications needs of potential or new managers? It is clear, from an analysis of the leading texts and course offerings, that writing texts and courses do not address downward communication processes which are a large part of managerial communication, and equally clear that the organizational communication texts and courses that do address this aspect do almost nothing with written communication, in any direction. Is the answer to

design writing courses that work on communicating with subordinates? Perhaps, but should such work be part of basic business and professional writing courses or would it be better presented in the context of management courses, so that the writing training would be undertaken concurrently with the study of management theory and principles? In other words, might it be dangerous, or at least inappropriate, to try to teach people to write as bosses before they are ready or able to understand, at least in theory, what it is bosses do and why?

A number of business school faculty members, and several practicing managers and executives (including those interviewed as part of this study), think that written managerial communication should be included in the organizational and managerial courses taught in graduate business programs and in special courses for new managers and executives, so that those elements of communication that are peculiar to managers can be learned in the managerial context. They believe equally strongly that this approach will work only if the students or new managers already have basic professional and analytic writing skills. In other words, training in managerial communication should not replace what we teach in business and professional writing; it should build on it, just as an MBA or other management training program builds on a person's professional or technical training in engineering, or accounting, or economics, or computer science.

If one accepts this reasoning, as I do, then the next question is how do we incorporate training in written managerial communication into management programs? Most MBA programs teach a course in interpersonal or communications skills, and most of these courses teach the students by having them study managerial situations and cases and then role-play in similar situations. The role-playing situations are almost always oral, not because the professors

who teach them object to written role-playing (which is certainly possible; it would be another form of the "in-basket" exercises that are popular training methods), but because their own training is often in speech or psychology or organizational behavior and not in writing.

Therefore, one follow-up to this study could be an attempt by business-school faculty and writing professionals to introduce written managerial communication skills into existing interpersonal and communications skills courses. Similarly, the executive development and managerial training workshops and short courses, which normally focus almost entirely on dealing with subordinates on a face-to-face basis, could be altered to include written skills as well. Few business school faculty or practicing managers will deny the practicability or the desirability of this idea, but neither will they act on it until someone demonstrates that it can be done. Perhaps it can be done, and it should be tried, but it may be that in order to do it well, more specific data on the connections between managerial activities and rhetorical behavior are needed. This research should be expanded, to look at more managerial writing and to learn more about managerial communication in general, in different settings -- in service industries as well as manufacturing in small organizations as well as in enormous ones, in non-technical or cultural settings as well as in industry, in non-profit as well as for-profit organizations -- not because the basic characteristics of managerial communication will be different from those identified in this study, but because this study was -- and was meant to be -- only a first step.

There are people, in other fields, doing related research. For example, Anne Sigismund Huff, of the University of Illinois business school, has studied documents produced by new executives and their subordinates to see how new leaders introduce their policies into an organizational setting and how the

wording of those policies (and, thus, the policies themselves) is changed as people come to know the new leader better and feel freer to disagree. (23) Clearly, there are places where her research and further studies of what constitutes "managerial communication" could intersect. Similarly, the results of this study both confirm and are confirmed by Mintzberg's results and the "levels" theories of Parsons, Simon, and Jerrell, suggesting once again that the fields of rhetoric and management, or organizational theory, have some things to say to one another. In their state-of-the-art essay on "Communication in Organizations," Porter and Roberts point out that "no comprehensive nor fully adequate theories or conceptual systems exist for explaining the nature of communication in organizationsl settings." They conclude that "the need is great for more varied and innovative approaches to studying communication in organizations, if solid research advances are to be made in this area in the future." (24) A happy end to this research project is the thought that it may be a small beginning step toward the research advances that need to be made in the area of organizational communication.

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